

INFORMATION ABOUT THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT BODIES AS A REALIZATION OF THE OPENNESS PRINCIPLE

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Abstract

The principle of openness can be considered as a basic principle in public administration. The openness of information about the activities of municipal government bodies in a certain territory is the realization of the Russian citizens' constitutional rights to information. The main tool of that type of interaction is the official website of municipal government bodies. It is found that the implementation of the right of citizens to reliable information about the activities of municipalities can be ensured if all the subject fields of the legally established parameters for all blocks of the study are filled in. In this case, the principle of information openness is effectively implemented, and the right to know acquires a positive social and legal aspect and the citizens' support. When monitoring the work with information on the activities of municipal authorities, the method of analysis was applied, 68 parameters and 3 criteria were used. Comparative and legal methods were used to determine the correspondence of information content at the official websites of municipal authorities to legislative requirements.

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Introduction

In 1985 the Council of Europe adopted the European Charter of Local Self-Government. It is an international legal instrument that promotes the principles of decentralization and autonomy by giving local authorities the right and effective ability to serve their interests. According to the general concept of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, first of all, the 'Right to know' should be realized, which means that the population knows about the decisions taken by local municipalities to the life of citizens themselves.

A study of Swiss municipalities is devoted to administrative openness, according to which it is concluded that the demand for transparency in the openness of public

administration bodies is constantly increasing and the same is recommended by many international institutions. Thus, in 16 municipalities the interviews with elected officials about the practice of distributing information on the Internet in Swiss municipalities were conducted. They showed that municipal autonomy positively impacted the degree of transparency at the local level (Keuffer & Mabillard, 2020). In addition, the dissemination of information on the Internet reduces transaction costs, provides direct access and quick responses, and allows the creation of customized content for users of official websites of public authorities.

The research has emerged on the design of governance models for creating public values in citizens' initiatives based on open data from public authorities (Santos & Galdino, 2019). Transparency is an essential component of e-government and, when applied to data openness, means ensuring that data is well-known, understandable, easily accessible, and open to anyone who wants to get information.

The problems of information openness are widely discussed in all spheres of human life and activity: from politics and public administration in countries to social services and applicants for positions in municipalities. The principle of information openness in the modern world provides citizens with access to various types of information and ensures transparency of the activities of municipal government bodies. (Kankanhalli, Zuiderwijk & Kumar Tayi, 2017; Kromidha & Córdoba-Pachón, 2017, Panova, Lustina, Borisova & Doronkina, 2018, Palíšková, 2018; Rezer, 2017, 2018, 2019).

Information exchange between the state and local government and society is an important factor from the point of view of state functioning and development (Irving-Clarke, 2017; Jaeger, Lyons & Wolak, 2016). Integral information environment becomes a city-forming feature in the era of information society formation and introduction of "e-government" into state management, this is confirmed by the actions and decisions taken by the authorities, especially in emergencies or in pandemics, which are typical for our time.

Issues of efficiency and transparency of municipal administration, citizen satisfaction with the work of the local administration are becoming subjects of research in many countries. A study of municipal information openness conducted in China showed that citizen participation, performance feedback, and accountability, and information openness were positively associated with citizen satisfaction in various performance parameters in different values (Liang, 2017). It can be concluded as confident because the principle of information openness, in this case, is implemented very successfully.

1 Methods

Monitoring of information on the activities of municipal government bodies in the Sverdlovsk region is carried out from December 2016 up to the present day. Students who receive a specialty in the direction of "State and Municipal Management" take part in monitoring by two forms: the project activities and the study of the discipline "Organizational and legal foundations of municipal management".

The research methodology uses the technology developed by T. M. Rezer based on the current legislation in Russia and the ratings of the Infometer platform. 41 official websites of cities and towns in the Sverdlovsk Region were analyzed. The information on the official website was analyzed in 8 blocks. Each block contained parameters taken from the legislation and formed a subject field to be filled in, and the completeness of filling was evaluated according to the criteria in each case separately.

The cities are grouped by population: the first group includes a population of more than 97,000 people; the second group - from 57,000 to 90,000 people; the third group - from 37,000 to 57,000 people. The legally established information on the activities of municipal government bodies on the official websites was examined by section.

When monitoring the work with information on the activities of municipal authorities, the method of analysis was applied, 68 parameters and 3 criteria were used. The first criterion is availability: the actual availability of information or service at the official website of the municipal authority. The second criterion is navigation convenience: search easiness of information at the official websites, the logic of the sections were analyzed, the number of clicks from the home page to desired subsections at the official website. The third criterion is completeness: integral volume of data placed at the official websites of municipal authorities. Comparative and legal methods allowed determining correspondence of information content at the official websites of municipal authorities to legislative requirements.

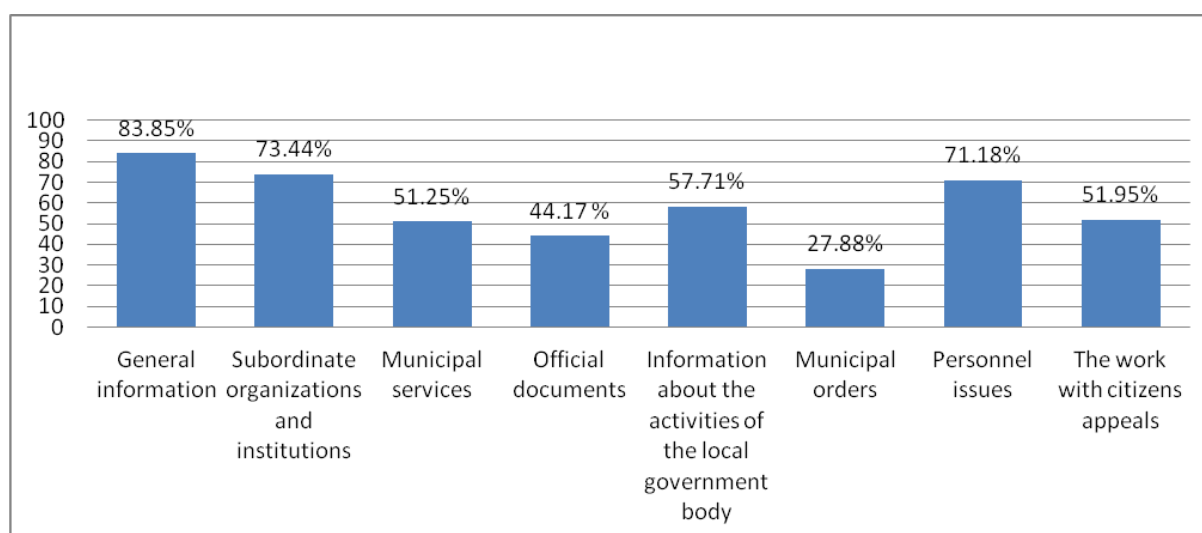
2 Results

As a result of the conducted research of information openness on 68 parameters of 8 blocks of each official site in 41 municipalities based on the developed technology, the following data were obtained.

In 2018 there was not a single block in which all the parameters were filled in 100%, which would not ensure complete information openness for the citizens of the municipalities. For example, the "General information" block, which became the leader of this rating, was filled only by 83.85 %. The names and structure of municipal government bodies were the highest

in the percentage of information provided in this block out of all the analyzed parameters, and the lowest parameter of information openness was recognized as the parameter of information about mass media, filling in the subject field was only 60.94% of cases.

Fig. 1: General information on the implementation of the principle of information openness for all parameters of the eight blocks



Source: the figure was developed by the author

In the second place, there is the block "Subordinate organizations and institutions". Information openness was 73.44 %. It was best represented by the list of organizations parameter, it reached 82.81 % of the cases filled in on the official website of the municipality. In this information block, the information on the parameter on the results of inspections and control was the worst, it was only 62.5 % of the information openness.

In the third place, there is the block "Personnel issues". The overall percentage of information openness was 71.18 %. In the block, the highest parameter of information openness was the presence of a link on the official website of the municipality to the site "Federal Portal of Managerial Personnel", the subject field of this parameter was filled in 93.75 % of cases.

In the fourth place, there is the block "Information about the activities of the local government body", the percentage of information openness was low, it was 51.95 %. The parameter of the placement of speeches of municipalities' heads was filled in only in 18.75 % of cases.

In the fifth place, there is the block "Working with requests, feedback", information openness was 51.71 %. The best information in this block was provided for the parameter of

citizens' reception time, filling in the subject field in 93.75 % of cases, but for the parameter availability of an interactive portal and the presence of accounts in the subject field, only 12.5% of cases were filled in.

In the sixth place, there is the block "Municipal services", information openness was 51.71 %. In this block, information on the parameter about the list of services and regulations for the provision was well provided, filling in 81.25 % of cases. The worst thing was filling in the mobile services parameter, it was only in 6.25 % of cases where indications of this parameter on the official websites of municipalities were presented.

In seventh place there is the block "Official documents", information openness was 44.17 %. In this block, the parameter local legal acts were best represented, in 98.44 % of cases there was a filling in of this subject field. The parameter judicial decisions on cases of invalidation of municipal legal acts were presented worse, there were indications of this parameter only in 21.88 % of cases.

The eighth block "Municipal Order" became an outsider in the blocks of information openness of official websites of municipalities, its information openness was only 27.88 %. Of all the parameters of this block, the highest percentage of the information provided had the parameter information about the delivery of goods in 53.57 % of cases. With the lowest percentage of information, openness was the parameter contact information on complaints in the field of procurement, there was the necessary information about this management process in 12.5 % of cases.

In the process of working with the official websites of municipal government bodies, comments were formed on filling them with the necessary information, as well as on recommendations for improving their design.

3 Discussion

The information openness of the websites of municipal government bodies is due to the processes of digitalization of human life, society, and public administration. Digitalization is the process of organizing the performance of functions and various activities in a digital environment that was previously performed by people and organizations without the use of digital products. Therefore, digitalization involves the introduction of information and digital technologies in each aspect of the company's activities. The legislation divides digital technologies into three categories:

- gradually introduced digital education, digital platforms, marketing integrations, smart assistants, namely chatbots, mobile payments;
- breakthrough digital technologies Internet of things, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, wireless communication, augmented reality;
- technologies of the near future, including office robots, quantum computing, directive analytics, and cryptocurrency.

Public administration is not only an administrative, but also a political process, and its systemic understanding includes the actions of formal and informal actors involved in the process of making and executing decisions, as well as formal and informal structures created for the perception and execution of these decisions.

The official website of the public administration body is considered as a real mechanism that allows you to effectively implement the principle of information openness in the administrative activities of government bodies at the municipal level and successfully implement the right to know a citizen.

Conclusion

In Russia, the concept of the development of the information society and the concept of digitalization of public administration are being implemented. The openness of municipalities is considered as one of the characteristics of the rule of law and a sign of the level of civil society development.

The principle of information openness is also interpreted as the principle of transparency, which implements the constitutional right of citizens to free access to information that contains the necessary information about the activities of public authorities. Article 29 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation describes citizens' access to official information: "Everyone has the right to freely seek, receive, transmit, produce and disseminate information in any lawful manner."

Therefore, information openness in that research context is such an organizational and legal regime for providing a sufficient and necessary amount of socially significant information about the activities of government bodies (structure, tasks, goals), based on the constitutional right of citizens to free access to information, where the coordination interaction of society with government structures is traced.

The comparative legal method was used to determine the compliance of the information content of the official websites of municipal authorities with the legislative requirements established in this area.

The leading official websites of local administrations are the websites of Nizhny Tagil, Verkhnyaya Pyshma, Berezovsky, the indicator of openness information about the activities of municipal government bodies is 100 %. On average, that indicator has increased by 25.7 % for over 5 years of monitoring.

Acknowledgment

The validity and reliability of the results and conclusions contained in the article are confirmed by the consistency of the results with the theoretical sources and empirical results of the author obtained earlier in the study of information openness of public administration, as well as a comprehensive level of analysis of the phenomenon under study.

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